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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1376  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3423  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2809  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000487

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH TALAS GOVERNOR

REF: A. BISHKEK 482

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 156

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Talas Oblast Governor Beishenbek Bolotbekov provided the Ambassador on May 14 with an exceptionally positive review of local economic and political conditions in his region. He said preparations for the July 23 Presidential election were proceeding smoothly. Bolotbekov also highlighted the economic impact of gold mining operations in Talas Oblast. A classic Soviet-era apparatchik strenuously molting into a Muslim, he first claimed that all of Lenin's "very wise" ideas had come from Shari'ah law -- but then bemoaned the spread of Islamic extremism in Kyrgyzstan. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) As part of her regional outreach, the Ambassador met Talas Oblast Governor Beishenbek Bolotbekov May 14. Bolotbekov, a former governor of Naryn Oblast, assumed his current position in January 2008. Bolotbekov described some of the Oblast's natural beauty and its historical significance, including a discussion of the Manas legend, before addressing the Ambassador's question about local economic conditions. The Governor noted that Talas was largely dependent on agriculture, specifically beans and potatoes. Although the worldwide financial crisis had impacted Talas (he cited the falling price of beans), Bolotbekov declared the economy healthy. During this year's mild winter, he said, the Oblast had endured power cuts of only two hours per day.

[1](#)3. (C) In response to a question from the Ambassador, Bolotbekov said rather defensively that preparations for the July 23 Presidential election were progressing "normally." Sounding annoyed, he further noted that all oblasts were responsible for preparatory activities, suggesting limited local involvement by the Central Election Commission.

[1](#)4. (C) Citing trade flows, Bolotbekov declared relations with neighboring Kazakhstan healthy. When the Ambassador

asked about border demarcation (an issue a local NGO representative raised in an earlier conversation), Bolotbekov discounted the concern, stating the no such disagreements on land boundaries existed.

15. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question about gold mining, the Governor proclaimed the local gold mining industry to be in good shape, although he noted some occasional ecological concerns. Bolotbekov noted that the Jerooy mine, now owned by Russian and Kazakh investors, contributed greatly to the Talas economy as it employed roughly 500 workers. (Note: In fact, both Jerooy and Andash, two large gold deposits in Talas, have faced ownership and ecological issues, and exploratory/development work has been delayed or curtailed at both sites. End Note.)

16. (C) A classic Soviet-era apparatchik, the Governor was visibly uncomfortable answering the Ambassador's questions and preferred monologue to dialogue. He also seemed to be trying to make sense of the new ideological circumstances he found himself in and to molt -- somewhat uncomfortably -- into a "good Muslim." During one of his disquisitions, he informed the Ambassador that Lenin had been "a great man," whose many "very wise" ideas had all come from Shari'ah law. When the Ambassador revealed that she knew Shari'ah law well, having just come from a posting in Saudi Arabia, he speedily backtracked. Saudi Arabia was responsible for the spreading Islamic extremism in Kyrgyzstan, he intoned, which was poisoning Kyrgyz youth. All people of good will should join in combating all forms of religious intolerance. On that last statement, at least, he and the Ambassador agreed.

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Comment

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17. (C) Bolotbekov's refusal to acknowledge any shortcomings harkened back to Soviet times. In recent times, Talas Oblast has been viewed as a potential center of opposition support, and in January local police were so concerned that they detained several opposition leaders following a rally in Talas city (ref B). With the political opposition attempting to rally support for the upcoming Presidential election, Bolotbekov will no doubt play a large role in keeping the Oblast "under control" during the campaign.  
GFOELLER